SECTION 5.0 - MICHIGAN SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

5.1 Introduction

Formerly referred to as Area I-2 (City of Lansing 1998), the former Michigan School for the Blind complex, a roughly rectangular ring of low, one and two-story buildings surrounds the schools' playing fields behind the formal symmetry o the older buildings of the original campus. The School for the Blind's Administration, High School, and Superintendent's Residence buildings are already State Historic Register properties, and were recommended as also eligible for the nomination to the NRHP. The school's importance in state and national education history for its methods of teaching the blind, its importance as a State institution, and the architectural importance of the three oldest buildings all combine to fulfill the NRHP eligibility requirements. It was further recommended that the complex's newer buildings, which are all less than 50 years old, were ineligible for nomination to the historic registers, but that they are far enough removed from the three older buildings to allow the definition of a more constrained historic district. It was also stated that the Michigan Historical Center had stated that "the historic landscaping and grounds should be nominated to the National Register," in addition to the buildings (City of Lansing 1998:11-12).

Pursuant to this end, the following sections provide the additional documentation that was requested by the Michigan SHPO. For the purposes of this discussion, we have chosen to subsume the historical and architectural significance of the Michigan School for the Blind under the unifying context of *Education*, with further emphasis on the sub-themes of *Institutional Architecture* and the *Michigan School for the Blind.*

It should be noted that more than 20 feet of archival material relating to the school's history is conserved at the State Archives of Michigan. These include board minutes, broom sales records, class books, general histories of students, ledgers, inventories, letters, registers of students, superintendents reports, surveys of the blind, maps, and photos. The following discussion only highlights the data contained within those documents.

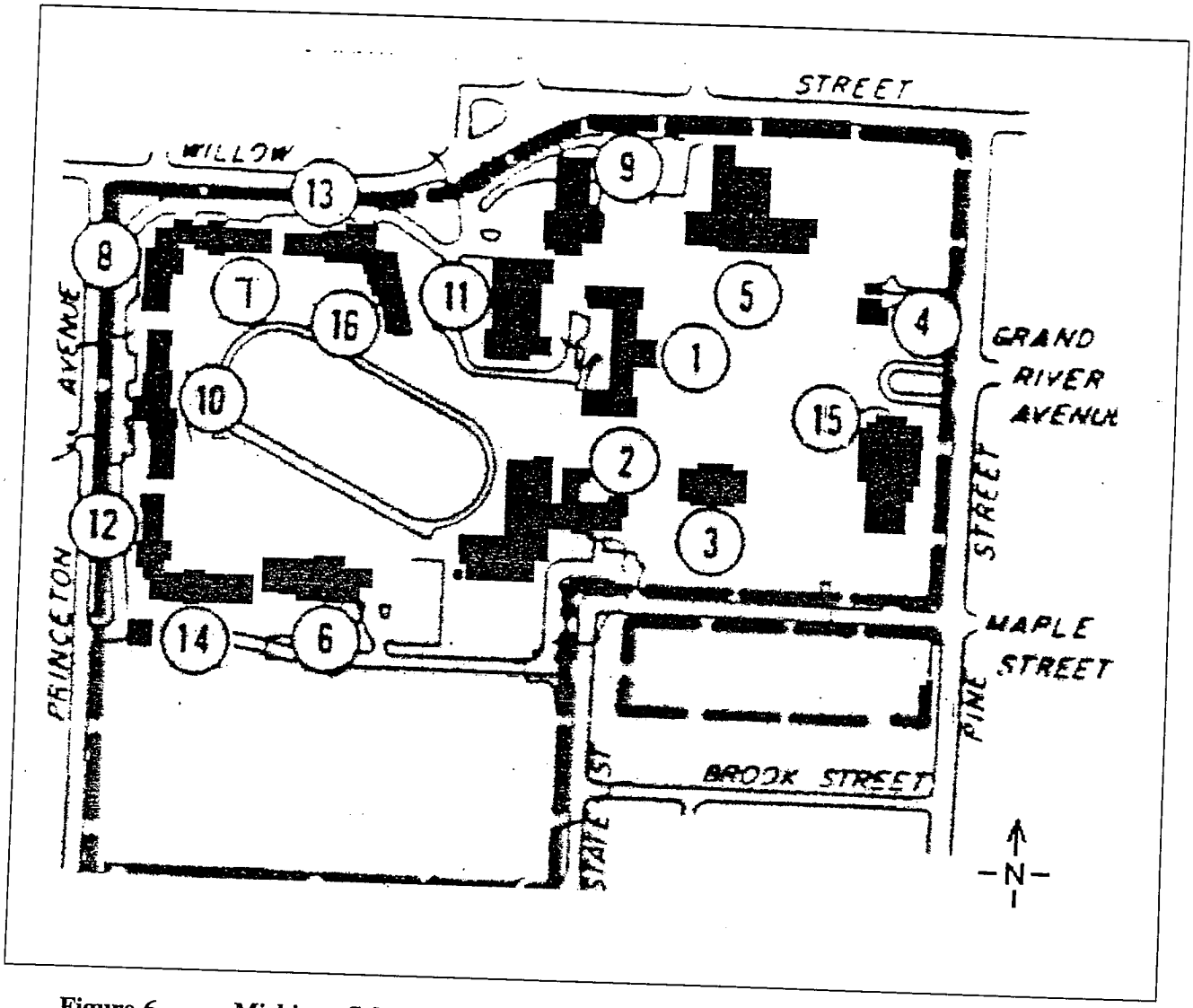

Figure 6. **Michigan School for the Blind Campus and photo key.**

1. Main Administration (13:11)
2. Health Center (11:8)
3. High School (13:10)
4. Supt. Residence (20:4)
5. Lion's Hall (13:14)
6. Pool and Gym (11:13)
7. Cottage C (13:6)
8. Abie House/Cottage D (11:18)
9. Physical Plant (20:9)
10. Longhouse/Cottages E & F (13:4)
11. Dining Hall (11:11)
12. Cottages 7 and 8 (13:3 and 11:25)
13. Nandy House/Cottage B (13:7)

14a. Huron Lodge/Building 8 (11:28)
[large building to north of numeral]

14b. Pumphouse (11:21)
[small building to west of numeral]

15. Library and Museum (20:3)
16. Blair House/Building A (13:8)

5.2 Context Statement - Education

Region: Michigan
Subregion: Lansing
Period: c. 1845 - 2000
Theme: Education
Sub-themes: Michigan School for the Blind, Institutional Architecture

Overview

Early educational development in Lansing reflected the split between the long established practice of private academy instruction and Michigan's pioneering system of public education, promoted by the state's first Superintendent of Public Instruction, John D. Pierce. As early as 1847, shortly after the legislature approved plans to move the state capitol to Lansing Township, a small rush of land speculation ensued. The children of these early settlers were taught by Miss Eliza Powell in the city's first school, a rough shack located near the site of the present Cedar Street School. By 1854, three school districts under township jurisdiction had been established, one each in the fledgling settlements of *Lower Town*, *Middle Town*, and *Upper Town*. In 1851, the Lower Town School District No. 2 replaced the initial shanty structure with a substantial two-story brick edifice which cost around $5000, an unprecedented figure for the time. During Lansing's formative years, the Cedar Street Second Ward School was one of the finest buildings in the area and served as meeting space for newly organized Lower Town churches before the completion of actual church buildings. In 1861, two years after Lansing's incorporation as a city, the legislature created a single city school district and the first Board of Education was elected.

Although three school districts existed by the mid-1850s, the idea of the superiority of private institutions died hard, especially among Lansing's pioneering Eastern seaboard settlers. Several schools led by private tutors undoubtedly existed; however, the most enduring and significant within the total state context was the *Michigan Female College*, founded in 1855 by Avon, New York natives, Abigail Rogers and her sister, Delia. A short-lived rival establishment, the *Female College and Preparatory School for Girls and Boys*, was founded by Helen K. Clapp. Michigan's female colleges and seminaries were established to provide advanced education beyond the primary school level at a time when women were barred from the state university. The state's branch school system, which provided secondary education and college preparation for boys, did have *female departments*, but after the branch system lost public funding, an effort was made to establish a separate state school for women. After 1855, various female seminaries emerged, among them the Lansing institutions, all apparently hoping to receive state funding (Dunbar 1980:345). The hope was in vain, however, and not until 1870 did Michigan Agricultural College (modern Michigan State University) and the University of Michigan become coeducational.

Although her Michigan Female College lacked public support, Rogers did garner sufficient private funds through the contributions of Detroit shipping magnate, Captain Eber Ward, and the fundraising efforts of such prominent North Lansing citizens as its first mayor, Hiram H. Smith, and merchant and plank road entrepreneur, James Turner. In 1857, the college moved to a spacious North Lansing tract. The Michigan Female College continued until Abigail Rogers' death in 1871. The buildings subsequently became part of an Odd Fellows' *Institute for*

Old and Disabled Members and later, the *Michigan School for the Blind*, which moved to Lansing in 1881.

The Michigan School for the Blind originally had been housed in Flint as part of the *Asylum for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind*, established through the State Constitution of 1848. However, in 1879 the state legislature determined it appropriate to found a school dedicated to the needs of the blind. Blind students from the Flint facility were temporarily moved to the old Female College/Odd Fellows property that same year, despite some local objections. "Lansing already had several state institutions and departments [among them the *State Reform School for Boys*, organized in 1855], and it had been unofficially decided not to bring any more institutions into the city ... The Odd Fellows made such an attractive offer, however, that in 1881 the Legislature purchased the property outright for $10,000 and undertook a remodeling program for the school" (Michigan Department of Education 1943). The institution became a public school in 1917, and by the 1940s was one of five leading schools for the blind in the country with, one of the nation's largest Braille libraries.

The other major state educational institution located in Lansing was the *Michigan State Reform School for Boys*, later known as the *Industrial School for Boys*, and most recently as the *Boys Vocational School*. The complex was situated on a 225-acre tract at 330 N. Pennsylvania, which included a work farm and various buildings. One of the most renowned 19th century superintendents was Cornelius A. Gower, a former superintendent of public instruction who "attained a national reputation in the management of boys without harsh discipline or prison surroundings" (*Lansing Illustrated* 1889). Surviving structures, now located behind Eastern High School and Pattengill Junior High (both built on part of the original reform school acreage), include the industrial building (1923), the power plant, a warehouse (1926), laundry (1926), and kitchen (1923) (Sanborn 1953).

Business and professional training schools also existed in Lansing during the 19th century. The earliest of these was *Lansing* or *Bartlett's Business College*, founded by Professor Henry P. Bartlett of Lansing in 1867. The school attracted male and female students from throughout the city, state, and adjacent states for the study of grammar, penmanship, bookkeeping, mathematics, English and commercial law (Durant 1880:158). R.E. Olds was among the students to complete an accounting and bookkeeping course there in 1883. Bartlett's successors were two brothers, William A. and C.E. Johnson, who arrived in Lansing in 1886, took over and expanded the school's curriculum, and renamed it *Interlake Business College*, then the oldest and largest commercial college in central Michigan. Johnson, a former school principal, formed a partnership with M.L. Minor in 1888 after his brothers death. The college was housed in a new Italianate structure at 231-37 S. Washington and stressed penmanship, commercial and normal studies, elocution, typewriting, and shorthand. The college, under new management, was later known as the *Central Michigan Business College*, and then *Lansing Business University*, which occupied the building through the 1920s.

During the late 19th century, Lansing's public schools underwent slow growth and change. In 1868, the board initiated the grading of schools, established position of superintendent, and founded a high school program. Nonetheless, despite the proximity of the Michigan Agricultural College, the nation's pioneer land grant college and the Lansing headquarters for the state superintendents of public instruction, the city's schools were not particularly innovative or noteworthy. In his parting address as Lansing school board president, then deputy superintendent of public instruction, Courtland Bliss Stebbins noted: "Lansing does not

now compare with other cities of comparable size in our State. Our school properties are unkempt, decayed and downright disreputable. They certainly are no inducement to prospective families seeking a suitable home and educational advantages for their children" (Darling 1950:174). Stebbins' particular interest was the establishment of kindergartens in Michigan schools. Some 20 years prior to the passage of the *State Kindergarten Act* in 1891, Stebbins helped organize a kindergarten at the Second Ward School on N. Cedar. The experiment ran out of funds in 1873, however, and it was not until 1908 that kindergartens were re-instated in the city's public schools.

While the 1873 *State Gazetteer* echoed Stebbins' assessment by describing Lansing's schools as "limited," the 1883 gazetteer entry boasted of six ward schools, a Catholic and German Lutheran parochial school (the most enduring of the city's various parochial schools) and the new high school, "one of the finest school buildings in the state, erected in 1874-75 at a cost of $55,000." The extensively remodeled high school, portions of which remain extant, was originally a Second Empire Style brick structure with quoined stone work, and a mansard roof. For some 50 years, until the completion of Eastern High School in 1927, the school board adopted a policy of expanding the old 1875 building, rather than constructing a new one. Beginning in 1943, *Old Central*, as the original high school was called, became *Lansing Technical High School*. In about 1967, *Lansing Community College* (LCC) acquired the building and remodeled it as the Administration Building. The handsome Neo-Classical Revival former high school and c. 1903-05 Carnegie Public Library building at 210 W. Shiawassee adjoins the school property to the south, and also has been affiliated with LCC since approximately 1967. The library was designed by Lansing architect, Edwyn A. Bowd.

Beginning in the 1890s, the school board embarked on a period of expansion which focused on establishment of ward schools in the growing suburbs along the city's outer fringes. Thirteen schools had been built by 1912. City population grew so rapidly during the next 30 years that 18 additional structures were completed by 1944 (Aldinger 1944:29-31). The 1894 Cherry Street School, a red brick Romanesque structure, closed due to declining inner city population and enrollment in 1933, and now houses offices. The remaining schools which qualify as historic structures were erected in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. Examples include the Genesee Street School (1910-1912), Allen Street School (1913, 1925), East Park School (1916), Cedar Street School (1918), Pattengill (formerly East) Junior High (1919-21, 1922, 1938), Walnut Street School (1923, 1937), Walter French Junior High (1924-25), and Eastern High School (1926-27, 1935-36). Many city schools were constructed or had additions and improvements built as part of the federal Works Progress Administration during the 1930s. Most exhibit fairly standard and undistinguished design features typical of "modern" architecture of the period. Indeed, Bartholomew's 1921 *Lansing Plan* complained of the planning and architectural characteristics of Lansing's schools. West Junior High was singled out as typical of the city's "barren, factory-like" school design and cramped lots. The most noteworthy exceptions are the Art Deco Walter French Junior High School at Mt. Hope and South Cedar, and the red brick, Tudoresque Eastern High School, the latter designed by noted school architect, Judson N. Churchill, with the Chicago firm of Pond, Pond, Martin, and Lloyd acting as consulting architects. Pond and Pond had designed similar Tudor Revival educational buildings at the University of Michigan (Michigan Union [1919], and Women's League [1929]). Bartholomew commented favorably on Eastern's design at the time, stating that "the new school on Jerome is far more in keeping with modern standards; schools of this type will give the city character (1921:49).

The 20th century period of facilities expansion coincided with new educational programs and techniques. Manual training, industrial arts, and domestic arts entered the 7th and 8th grade curricula in 1904. However, preliminary investigation does not suggest any innovations connected with the ground breaking vocational and pedagogy work then being conducted by Walter H. French at the nearby Michigan Agricultural College. French's pedagogy students did observe classes at Lansing grade schools and high school, but the pioneering centers for teacher training were established in East Lansing and Haslett, rather than Lansing.

Under the leadership of then Lansing High School principal, Jay W. Sexton, high school vocational education began in 1912-13, and in 1914 the highly successful night school adult education program was instituted for English and citizenship instruction. Sexton was appointed board superintendent in 1916, and was instrumental in the organization of the junior high system during the early 1920s. A newspaper interview appearing in the *State Journal* (28 April 1955) suggests that Lansing was the second city in the nation to place 7th, 8th, and 9th graders in a separate junior high school. However, Springman (1952:73-75) states that the nation's first junior high was probably in Berkeley, California, c. 1910, while Muskegon had a junior high as early as 1911. By 1918, just before construction began on Lansing's West Junior High, some 43 junior highs already existed throughout the state (Springman 1952). Although not innovative on a state or national level, the three Lansing junior highs constructed during the 1920s marked "the most significant [Lansing] educational advance in nearly a half century" (Darling 1950:185).

Michigan School for the Blind

Education of the blind has proved to be a challenge since ancient times. Blindness was often viewed with trepidation and the supernatural powers occasionally imputed in them did not necessarily alleviate the social position of the blind. During the Middle Ages, charitable institutions or donations commonly maintained the blind with little attention to creating productive positions for them. Poetry and music were often the only avenues of creative expression open to the blind. Proponents for the universal education for the blind did not arrive until the end of the Enlightenment. Valentin Haüy, a French *philosophe*, was sympathetic to the neglected poor and handicapped of Paris and founded the first school for the blind there in 1784. Haüy worked to educate the blind in all subjects and was the earliest proponent of teaching industrial arts to the blind. He also experimented with raised or tactile writing systems. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars undid much of his work in France, but did raise awareness among others in England and the German states. Some interested Americans educators visited the Europeans schools for instruction in their methodology.

In the United States, education of the blind first occurred in the late 1820s and early 1830s in the great cities of the Northeast, including Boston, New York and Philadelphia, with the appearance there of quasi-public institutions supported in part by state legislatures. Between 1837 and 1860, twenty additional institutions were established supported by both private endowments and state aid. The early 19th century was also an era in which considerable experimentation in tactile writing was conducted and numerous competing systems were devised. The raised-dot method developed by Louis Braille was eventually adopted as the most useful. Probably first invented as a cipher for transmitting military intelligence at night by the French engineer and inventor, Charles Barbier, Braille was quick to grasp its utility for the sightless. Born in 1809, Louis Braille lost his eyesight as a result of an accident at an early age. He published his first work in 1829, and the complete writing system was announced in 1837.

It was not adopted in France, however, until 1854, two years after his death. The Braille writing system was introduced in the United States about 1860, but remained in competition with the New York Point system for several years. The Hall Braille Writer, invented in 1892 by Frank H. Hall, did much to establish the simpler Braille system (French 1932).

The Michigan School for the Deaf and Blind was authorized by the state legislative act in 1848 and finally opened in Flint in 1854, but only one of the first twelve students was blind. The blind were always in a "great minority" at the Flint school, and the needs of the two sorts of students were such, that the legislature mandated the establishment of a separate school for the blind in 1879 (Fuller 1939:434-35; Wood 1916[1]:592-94; Public Act 1879: No. 250). The committee formed to implement the program visited a similar state school in Janesville, Wisconsin, to procure useful information for meeting the school's needs. After considering proposals from several communities throughout southern Michigan, the committee accepted an offer for the buildings and property of the International Order of Odd Fellows from the officers of the Grand Lodge (MSB 1880:3-5; Thomson 1881:443-48).

The original school building within the I.O.O.F. complex actually dated to 1857, when it was built for the Michigan Female College. This school was created to address the need for the education of women in the state, largely through the efforts of sisters Abigail C. and Delia Rogers. The daughter of two educators, Abigail Rogers (1818-1869) was a native of the western New York Genesee valley town of Avon. By the age of 19 she was academically prepared to take charge of a ladies' seminary in Coburg, Ontario. After serving in other similar positions in New York, she arrived in Albion, Michigan, in 1847. She later moved to Ypsilanti as preceptress of the State Normal School there. In 1855, after attempts to gain entry for women into the University of Michigan failed, Abigail C. Rogers came to Lansing to establish a college specifically for their education. The college initially met at other locations, including the Capitol building, prior to the completion of buildings in 1857-58. The initial development relied heavily upon generous donations by interested philanthropists, and both the original tract of land and money for the buildings were received as gifts. The brick building was designed to consist of a square four-story central unit with wings attached the north and south sides, although the south wing was never built. The Rogers sisters failed in their repeated attempts to gain state funding for the college (Edmonds 1944:94-97; *Lansing State Journal* 1930:62- 69; Smith 1884).

The Michigan Female College was closed after the death of Abigail Rogers in 1869, and the property, which by then included 45 acres of land, was donated to the I.O.O.F., which intended to establish a charitable and benevolent institute for the relief of indigent members and their children. In 1871-72, the order invested $30,000 to extensively rebuild the main portion of the building in a Second Empire style. The institution never fulfilled the goals of the organizers and, in 1880, was leased to the state for use as a school for the blind. The state purchased the property the following year (Brown 1873:22; Cowles 1905:108-11; Durant 1880:167; MSB 1880:3-5; Mudge 1878:5).

After obtaining the property, the board of commissioners immediately recommended extensive renovations and additions, including other support buildings and an engine house. In 1883, the state allotted funds for a complete rebuilding of two wings to the main building and constructing a chapel, a superintendent's house, and a barn. William Appleyard, a Lansing architect, designed these renovations, probably in connection with his father, James Appleyard, also an architect and construction superintendent. The senior Appleyard came to Lansing about 1872

from Rochester, New York, to supervise the construction of the state capitol for Nehemiah Osburn, the contractor for the edifice. By 1880, he was among the top 25 property owners in the city. Although construction of the chapel was postponed, the new additions would increase the school's accommodations from 50 to 150 students. Long porches were built along the outer faces of the addition wings. Fire safety also became a concern for the multistoried structure and steps were taken to remedy that situation by erecting fire escapes and a water supply system in 1885 (Cowles 1905:222-23; Durant 1880:142; MPHC 28:49-50; MSB 1880:6-7, 1885:5-17, 42, 1887:9-10).

Contemporary plat and insurance maps (Ogle 1895:42; Sanborn-Perris 1898:18) illustrate the configuration of the complex during this period. The center unit of the main administrative building housed the kitchen and dining room in the basement, offices and parlor on the first floor, and a gymnasium on the fourth floor. The lateral building ells contained hospital facilities, matron quarters, and dormitories for the students. The two-story brick superintendent's house was situated northeast of the main building. Broom-making and Braille printing was carried out in a 2½-story brick factory to the north of the main building. A masonry steam laundry and powerhouse with attached coal sheds was placed to the northwest and rear. The wooden barn was north of this.

Blindness was a very real medical and social condition during the 19th century. Medical treatment had yet to reduce or alleviate the causes of blindness, which had several proximate causes, with accident, infectious diseases, and congenital defects contributing the largest proportion. The invention of the Braille system of writing greatly facilitated the education of the sightless and many states also began to take an interest in training such persons in productive occupations. Both great authors and contemporary school texts were transliterated into Braille. Most of the males were trained in broom and brush-making, but many with natural abilities were instructed in piano tuning. Hammock-making, net-making, and rug-making were also taught to many students. Female students were trained in the culinary arts and sewing. Most of these occupations did not require capital investments in a shop or tool kit. The school also operated a farm and dairy which taught practical skills, as well as providing foodstuffs for the institution. An institutional band was maintained and cadet-style training provided. The orchestra and choir frequently performed concerts for the city's residents (Cowles 1905:111; MSB 1898:8-9).

The 1884 state census reported 577 blind individuals in the state, but both this figure and national census returns were believed to be grossly underestimated. The school opened with 33 students in 1880, many of who were transferred from the older Flint institution. By 1896, the enrollment had increased to over 100, and although the building could accommodate 155, the lack of sufficient dining facilities restricted increases to that limit. Newspapers throughout the state were instrumental in advertising the state program for blind instruction. The minimum age for admittance was ten, but younger students were admitted upon discretion. The age of entrance was reduced to seven in 1897. By 1904, the superintendent believed that education for the blind should be mandatory, and thought that the younger age of the entering students was a "very hopeful and encouraging sign." The 1900 federal census enumerated 105 students in June of that year, and perhaps some more had returned home for the summer. Of those reported, 58 were male. Most were white, but at least three black students were attending the school. Males ranged in age from 4-47, but three-fourths were between the ages of 10-20. The 47 year-old male was clearly not typical of the student body, as the remaining male population was aged 30 and under. Female students ranged in age from 3-25, with two-thirds between the ages of 10-

20. Women in their twenties were more likely to stay on than their male counterparts. Eighty percent of students were born in Michigan, with most of the remainder from nearby Northeastern and Midwestern states, as well as Canada. At least two students had been born in Germany and sixteen others were children of German-speaking parents. Scattered others were second-generation offspring of English, Scottish, Irish, French, Polish, and Danish immigrants. One black student claimed to have been born in Mississippi of African parents. At least two sets of siblings were reported. Enrollment increased to 121, with an average attendance of 118 by 1903-4, and by 1916, 151 students were in attendance. By 1910, the institution could boast numerous graduates employed in productive situations throughout the state and country. Many of the women graduates had subsequently married (Cowles 1905:109; MSB 1880:7, 1885:16, 1896:10, 1898:3, 1905:9, 1909:27-29, 1917:8-9; U.S. Census 1900).

At the turn of the century, the school's commissioners continued to clamor for a new chapel and dining room. To this demand, they added a request for a new detached hospital building. The existing medical facilities were inadequate for the institution's needs and, because they were located in the main building, hindered attempts to quarantine contagious or epidemic diseases (1898:10, 13). By early 1904, these structures had been erected through funds appropriated by the legislature (Cowles 1905:111; MSB 1905:9). The new chapel and dining room building were located to the center rear of the main building and were connected to it by a covered corridor. The basement kitchen contained iron baking ovens. The two-story brick-built hospital was situated 115 feet south of the south wing of the main building (MSB 1907:27, 47; Sanborn 1906). Working towards compulsory education for the state's blind children brought forth the necessity for a traditionally organized formal setting, and by 1910, a school building had been built southeast of the main building. This "splendid and commodious" structure, which still stands, was reportedly the first such building in the country specifically erected for that purpose (MSB 1911:3; Sanborn 1913).

By 1914, two new student residence halls with bathing facilities were completed and the "change from the old, damp, foul-smelling, illy [sic] ventilated, and altogether unhealthy basements ... wrought a miracle in the life of the school ... which has given a fresh spirit of hopefulness to the entire student body." The first of these was known as Elm Hall, and was designed by Edwin Bowd, a prominent Lansing architect. The state archives currently retains the plans for this structure. The other of these residence buildings seems to have been accomplished by converting the superintendent's house to a dormitory. A replacement dwelling was built towards the front of the complex (MSB 1915:9-11; Sanborn 1913-51).

These new structures highlighted the inadequacies of the main administration building and began a new phase in the evolution of the educational complex. Members of the State Board of Charities and Corrections agreed with the superintendent that the original main part of that aging structure was a substandard dilapidated firetrap and not designed for the use which it was presently occupied. Again, Edwin Bowd was hired to design a new fireproof administrative building, which, at least in outline, largely followed the plan of the original building. The old central building and north wing were razed in 1916, forcing the use of the broom shop as a dormitory (MSB 1917:7). The central section of the Colonial Revival masonry structure was completed in 1916, the north wing in 1918, and the south wing in 1924. An additional large structure was erected to the rear of the main building, probably sometime in the 1930s or 1940s. It contained an auditorium, bake shop and a new laundry (Sanborn 1913-51). Increased fire protective measures were added to Elm Hall in 1948 (State Archives of Michigan).

In 1917, the MSB was made a public school and transferred to the State Department of Social Welfare. The 1920 federal census failed to record any data concerning the students, but did report the presence of some 45 employees, including the head superintendent and family, the principal and family, the engineer and family, a bookkeeper, matrons, hall maid, seamstresses, cooks, a baker, laundry workers, and several kinds of teachers. By about 1925, enrollment had increased to about 180 students (Undated press photo, State Archives of Michigan). In 1937, the institution was placed under the control of the State Board of Education (Anonymous 1968).

The final phase of development of the MSB occurred in the early 1960s, when the complex was increased from about 8 to 21 buildings. The Lansing architectural firm of Manson, Jackson & Kane designed the new improvements. Elm Hall was torn down and eight modern residential cottages were constructed. These were placed in a swale behind the older campus buildings, which had seen little use prior to this time. The new residences were intended to provide an environment in which blind children could learn to cope with the problems of independent daily living. Other new buildings erected during this period included a library, physical education center, and an elementary school. The campus was closed in the 1990s.

Edwyn A. Bowd: *Lansing's Great Architect*

Edwyn A. Bowd's career in structural design lasted over fifty years, and when he died in 1940, the editor of the *Lansing State Journal* bemoaned the "demise of Lansing's great architect, yes, Michigan's great architect, who ... laid down his gifted pencil without having bragged of his prowess once." In spite of his retiring nature, the architect's name had acquired a "talismanic power" in the city (*Lansing State Journal* 19 July 1940).

Edwyn A. Bowd was born in Cheltenham, England, in 1865, and after graduating from Orset College, Dover, he came with his mother to Detroit in 1882. Bowd began his career with the prominent architectural firm of Gordon W. Lloyd (*Lansing State Journal* 18 July 1940). Lloyd was also English-born, but spent most of his youth in Canada. He returned to England for his education, gaining proficiency in the construction of churches, and designing several in Detroit (Ferry 1968:49-51). After working with Lloyd for a few years, Bowd left for Saginaw, where he remained briefly before coming to Lansing about 1888. In Lansing, Bowd was first associated with William Appleyard, but after a year purchased his share and struck out on his own (*Lansing State Journal* 18 July 1940). Although his offices were in Lansing, he designed municipal, institutional, corporate and ecclesiastic structures throughout the state. From about 1890-1910, much of Bowd's known work followed the Richardsonian Romanesque style. But by the turn of the century, he experimented with Neoclassical designs, and by about 1910, this style dominated his approach. Throughout both these periods of his work, Bowd continually employed the technique of red brick superstructures on light-colored, dressed stone ashlar foundations.

One of the earliest structures attributed to Bowd is the Lansing post office, which was completed in 1894. This is a classic, symmetrical Romanesque structure, with attached circular tower. A few distinctive treatments seem to distinguish Bowd's design for this structure. The main roof has been hipped, and he disdained the typical conical tower roof, replacing it with a crenellated flat roof. Bowd followed this with the Lansing city hall, which was finished in 1896. The building was considerably larger than required, because city administrators believed that they could wrest county governmental offices from the city of Mason. The structure retains many Romanesque features. The first floor is built of heavier stone with circular arched

windows and portals. Similar fenestration accenting the design is found in the upper attic, tower, and some of the cross gable windows. Most of the windows of the two upper stories are rectangular with stone transoms and/or lintels. The clock tower has a beveled square shape topped with a pyramidal roof. The superstructure is built of smaller-sized stone (Cowles 1905:75; and *Lansing Journal* 1902).

Bowd further experimented with Romanesque designs in two Lansing churches: the First Baptist Church and the Pilgrim Congregational Church. Both exhibit a somewhat exuberant attempt to incorporate all of the design elements of the Richardsonian style. The Baptist church, dedicated in 1894, was built of drift rock, gneiss and granite, with pressed brick trimmings. It has a square bell tower and a smaller round tower. The latter is obscured by a square blocky entranceway. Again the portals and lower windows are arched. The Congregational church was finally completed in 1900, after a disastrous fire destroyed an earlier attempt as it neared completion. Constructed of brick, a square bell tower is nestled in the notch of the main cross-gabled structure. Quarter round naves broken by smaller circular towers flank the front. A small hip-roof portico covers the entrance and leads to a gabled foyer which separates them (*Lansing Journal* 1902). For the Masonic Temple, Bowd created a composite Romanesque design. While the basic plan is Romanesque, the upper gable façades have a Spanish mission outline, and with a nod to the Masons, Bowd placed squared onion domes on the flanking corner towers (Bovee 1913).

By 1900, Edwyn A. Bowd began to procure contracts for significantly larger structures, and he also began to experiment with Neoclassical designs. The massive, blocky Ingham County courthouse in Mason is built of rusticated stone and again has a distinctive foundation treatment. The full height front gabled entryway has Ionic columns. Circular arched treatments are found on the front portal, dormer windows and clock tower (Cowles 1905:32-33). Bowd's rather nondescript plan of the original Reo factory buildings basically followed traditional New England mill construction patterns. The new administration building of the Industrial School for Boys, which was built before 1905, exhibits Bowd's mastery of the classical Romanesque style and further established his reputation as an architect of large-scale projects, which was recognized by his commission to design the State of Michigan's building at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition (Cowles 1905:97; *Lansing State Journal* 19 July 1940).

Near the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Bowd completed the transition in styles from Romanesque to Neoclassical. Two structures commissioned by Ionia County illustrate the change. A "two-story, fortress-like rectangular block fronts the large drill hall of the brick Romanesque Revival Ionia Armory," which was erected in 1908-1909. The building had a heavily corbeled cornice and turret, and castellations show Bowd's continued attachment to that artistic detail (Branch 1916[1]: Plate facing p. 68, 506-7; Eckert 1993:270). The design of this building exuded the image of what a military structure of the era should project. Just a year earlier in 1907, Bowd completed the plans for the new Ionia County Farm. This was a masterful example of Neoclassical style built of Ionia red brick set upon a white stone foundation. White Ionic columns and white stone trimmings created a striking appearance (Branch 1916[1]:68-9).

During this period, Bowd worked steadily on several municipal projects, often for communities with limited budgets. Among these were the plans for the Montcalm County courthouse, funding for which was finally approved in 1910 after a five-year electoral battle. Built of pressed buff brick set on a stone footing, the "simple Beaux-Arts Classical structure with

Georgian overtones ... met the requirements of a modest budget but conveyed the dignity of county government." Similar designs were carried through for other out-state structures, including the Wexford County courthouse and the Holland city hall (Dasef 1916[1]:53-7, illustration opposite p. 488; Eckert 1993:375). Another example of the genre is the Hillsdale city hall, built in 1911-13. Bowd designed a pentagonal building that fit the building lot's plan. Four large Ionic columns support the entry porch which fronts a structure built of orange Puritan pressed-brick supported by a canyon-cut stone foundation (Eckert 1993:198; Ferguson 1976[2]:127-8). The Mason city hall was also designed by Bowd (*Lansing State Journal* 18 July 1940).

Beginning as early as 1907, Bowd began designing buildings for the Michigan Agricultural College (MSU). Both the Engineering (1907) and Agriculture (1909) buildings show his concept for educational buildings at that time and "combined a façade touched with grandeur and a roof economically flat." His use of a light-colored stone foundation and portal outline presages his design for the c. 1910 Michigan School for the Blind school building, although the latter has a distinctly different window arrangement. Bowd's plan for the new Wells Hall residence at the Michigan Agricultural College, also completed in 1907, is a dramatic departure from his other educational structures. This four-story building has a gambrel or Dutch Colonial roofline with six cross gables. The division into six wards, with separate entrances separated by fireproof walls, showed Bowd's attention to current concepts of safety. The architect continued to accentuate the foundation and entryways with lighter stone (Kuhn 1955:214; Beal 1915:281-84).

About 1910, Bowd began the building of new and replacement buildings on the campus of the Michigan School for the Blind. The earliest of these was the school building, which still stands. Beginning in 1914 with the plans for Elm Hall, a new dormitory for students since razed, and the superintendent's house, and followed two years later by the main administration building, Bowd adopted a Colonial Revival style. This seems to represent a break with his earlier work. Bowd was also contracted to design new buildings for the Michigan School for the Deaf in Flint (Withey and Withey 1956:68-9).

In 1913, Bowd was hired to draw plans for new administration and dormitory buildings at the Flint's Michigan School for the Deaf (Wood 1916[1]:592-96). The main building at the MSB shows strong similarities to his design for the main building at the Flint institution, although the treatment of the fenestration and ell end gables differ substantially from that structure.

Bowd designed several structures on the Michigan State College campus in the 1920s. Other works by him include the State Office Building (with Albert Kahn) built in 1920-22, and the Home Economics Building and Library (1929). In 1925, Orla Munson became Bowd's partner and in 1929, the firm of Bowd and Munson was incorporated. The new firm created designs for the Knapp's Building (1937-39), the Lansing Board of Power and Light Building (1937-40), an addition to the Michigan State University Union (1936), and an addition to the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District Building (Eckert 1993:295, 300, 537; *Lansing State Journal* 18 July 1940; Withey and Withey 1956:68-9).

In spite of his *metier*, Bowd resided in a modest home on W. Main Street. He had purchased the home in 1906, which was then located at the southeast corner of Allegan and Capitol, and was said to have been built in Lansing's "early days." In 1923, he moved the house to its present location, where he tenderly restored it. In 1939, Bowd was feted with a celebration of

his fifty years in Lansing. Just over a year later, he died unexpectedly of a heart attack while at home from work for lunch. He was survived by his wife, daughter and two grandchildren (*Lansing State Journal* 18 July 1940).

Summary

According to the Michigan Department of State's Bureau of History Michigan School for the Blind Complex *Inventory Form*:

> the Michigan School for the Blind Complex has historical significance for containing the oldest remaining buildings on the Michigan School for the Blind campus, and has architectural significance as the work of Edwyn A. Bowd (1865-1940) of Lansing, noted architect of Michigan city halls, county courthouses, and state-owned public buildings.

It should be noted that of the 20+ structures standing within the MSB campus, all but three were built post-1950. The earliest of the three older structures is the Bowd-designed c. 1910-11 high school building, a rectangular three-story (plus attic) structure with a nearly flat roof and a denticulated cornice. Two brick chimneys project from the west side of the roof. Central pavilions project from the north and south façades of the building, and the main entrance is located in the center of the north pavilion. The raised basement story walls are smooth ashlar limestone, and the central entrance on the north façade is surrounded by limestone. Narrow, tall sash windows are grouped in three on the north pavilion and on the west façade. The remainder of the windows in the building are grouped in two. Keystones accent the windows on the third story of the north façade, and a stone string course separates the third and attic.

The second of the original structures is the Bowd-designed, c. 1914, superintendent's Colonial Revival residence, a 2½-story structure with steep hip roof and central hip dormer. The central side-lit entrance is surmounted with a Classical Revival frieze supported by turned wood columns. The side entrance is highlighted by a hip-roofed full-width porch with turned wood Doric columns and light, turned wood, balustraded railing. The rear porch is similarly defined. Windows of the house are primarily four-over-one sash, and two eight-over-one windows on the first story of the front façade are accented with splayed brick lintels and keystones. Exposed rafter tails are visible beneath the wide eaves, and a brick chimney projects from the rear of the roof, beside a shed roofed dormer. A modern, one story, two-bay garage is located to the rear of the house.

To the rear of the supervisor's house is a flat-roofed two-car garage built of the same brick as the house. The building size has been increased by the addition of a short, frame extension, with a forward facing lean-to roof. The pergola is a roughly 12 x 16 ft open arbor built of six 4 x 4 inch posts, and tied together at the top of the sides with 2 x 10 inch rim joists with scalloped decorative ends. Laid on these are 2 x 4 inch cross-members covered with corrugated fiberglass sheeting, which may be a recent addition. Two grapevines sprouting from the center side posts indicate that the original function of this open structure was as arbor support. Near the pergola is a small two-door frame shed, probably used for the storage of gardening implements and supplies. Like the arbor, it is built of post-World War II dimension lumber. The roofing consists of plywood sheeting covered with shakes, and further overlain with asphalt shingles. The doors are made of beveled-edge tongue-and-groove 6-inch boards. The lapboard siding has a seven-inch exposure, again a more recent stylistic treatment.

The last of the original structures is the c. 1916 Bowd-designed administration building, a long, rectangular, three-story, side-gabled, Neoclassical-style brick building with a central, temple-front portico and two pedimented end pavilions. The three-story, pedimented central portico is supported by a colonnade of four massive stone Doric columns, and a central *ovolo* with keystone *voussoirs* is located in the brick *tympanum*. The pediment is decorated with a denticulated cornice and a festooned frieze. The portico projects from a central, five-bay pavilion that is delineated at the roofline by a brick parapet and four brick chimneys. The main, central entrance is a double doorway with a large transom above. Double windows flank the entrance, and the doorway and double windows are each surrounded by an arched opening with keystone. Keystoned arches surround all of the first story windows. Fenestration throughout the building is primarily eight-over-one sash windows, with bracketed stone sills on the third story. A stone stringcourse runs along the building at the second story sill level, and each window on the second story is decorated with a keystone. A stone water table separates the basement and first stories. The pedimented end pavilions project slightly from the front façade, and then continue to the rear to form gabled wings on each end of the building with similar fenestration patterns to the front façade.

While the overall historical significance of the Michigan School for the Blind, and the architectural significance of its three surviving, Edwyn Bowd-designed, early 20th century buildings appears straightforward, the significance of the larger campus appears requires further consideration. The earliest photos of the Michigan School for the Blind campus show that the buildings were originally situated in a mostly treeless expanse, although a few maple trees closely surrounded the main building. A straight boardwalk led back from the street to the center of the main building (Edmonds 1944:97). The grounds, as received from the I.O.O.F. in the 1880s, required extensive work in order to make them usable for the sightless. The swale to the south and west of the main building contained a wetland which was tiled for drainage. It was hoped that backfill from new construction would help to fill the remaining low areas, although it would prove inadequate to the task. Grading was also required around the north wing. The fences on the property, especially those surrounding the agricultural area, were considered to be dilapidated and in need of immediate repair (MSB 1885:12). By the mid-1890s the lawn had suffered greatly from a series of dry seasons, resulting in an increase in the numbers of noxious weeds. The southerly third of the lawn was plowed under for farm crops in the hopes that it could eventually be restored. Several gravel drives and roadways which required constant upkeep had also been put in by this time. In 1904, the sidewalks were reported to be broken and uneven and a "constant menace to the sightless pupils." In response, the commissioners requested $1000 to repair this "bad and somewhat dangerous condition.." Some 350 young trees, mostly maple and elm, were planted during the 1890s, and most were growing nicely, "promising great improvement of the premises." The central drive leading to the main building was lined with these trees (MSB 1896:10, 1905:9, 21-22, 1909:frontispiece; Sanborn-Perris 1898:18; Sanborn 1906). The gravel drives appear to have been taken out about 1910, and replaced with pedestrian walkways. The central walk to the main building was of a bifurcated plan, leading from Pine Street, and which converged halfway to the administrative building (cf., Sanborn 1913). Several postcards from this period in the State Archives illustrate the contemporary landscaping. The trees, mostly hard (sugar) maples and elms were maturing, and two chevron-shaped flowerbeds flanked the central sidewalk. The question of fencing continued to plague the institution and the superintendent complained that the campus was not properly protected. He reported that the campus:

> is so situated that it is on the direct route from the northwestern part of the city, to the street-car line and to paved streets, and the utmost vigilance does not succeed in doing away with trespassing. Shrubs and flower beds are badly injured and the otherwise beautiful lawn is very much defaced by the constant tramping across it of individuals who resent being spoken to and claim their right to state property. Properly protected and cared for, this campus can be made one of the beauty spots of the city and is about the only park in this section of the city. I therefore urge very strongly the building of a durable, and ornamental iron fence on the south, west, and north boundaries of the campus (MSB 1915:10).

The construction of new buildings continually altered the landscape at the MSB. The building episode of the 1910s created several new walkways and likely removed numerous trees. An aerial photograph of the campus dated about 1925 shows that the central bifurcated walkway was retained at that date. From that main sidewalk, other walks angled off to create access to the dormitories and the school building. Elms were the predominant tree species, with a few maples around the main building. Three or four evergreens were located in the southeast quadrant of the front grounds. A 1956 photograph in the State Archives shows that extensive modifications were made to the landscaping when the Health Center was installed. Elsewhere, the remaining trees were maturing, but it is safe to conclude that most of the elms succumbed to Dutch Elm disease during this period, because few if any elm trees are present today.

The modern landscaping stems largely from a plan devised by Manson, Jackson and Kane in the 1960s. A copy of this *Comprehensive Development Plan* is located in the State Archives. Field survey of the property shows that some changes have occurred even since then. The 1960s building phase included a major reworking of the walkways of the campus, retaining only the original central Y-shaped walkway. This has since been replaced with a single linear walk. The new plan also added the small circular drive at the front of the property. Today, perhaps some of the hard maple trees, which are 30-36 inches in diameter, may date to the turn of the century. Many of these are located in the south front of the main building, and north and east of the supervisors house. A few 20-30-inch walnut and 24-inch gingko trees in the south front may be somewhat younger. A line of crabapple trees near the front of the lawn near the library may date to the 1960s rebuilding. Many of the other ornamental trees present today seem to be considerably younger. These include young 12-inch exotic or hybrid white oaks near the front entrance, young Norway maples, three 12-inch spruce trees, a small mountain ash, and a small crab or apple tree. There are a few scattered shrubs such as yews and dogwoods on the front lawn. The landscaping of the front grounds of the MSB has undergone continual alteration. As such, it appears that although a few trees may remain from the early 20th century plantings, the overall MSB landscape plan retains little physical or visual relationship to that of the early or even middle 20th century. Modern roads, walkways, ornamental plantings, and building footprints are the product of more than 100 years of site development, with post-1960 modifications being the most prevalent visual aspects.

The important and significant exception to this general statement is the old central quadrangle, as defined by the c. 1916 Main Administration building on the west, the c. 1910 High School building on the south, and the more recent Lions building on the north. Further framing for this area is provided by the c.1914 Superintendent's residence to the east, along Pine Street (Figure 6). Despite apparent reworking of older roads and walkways, this central area represents an impressive vista that both defines the older buildings that surround it, and imputes a strong sense of the visual setting that Edwyn A. Bowd sought to achieve with his original

designs. As such, the landscape in at least this portion of the MSB complex must be considered a contributing feature.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the research presented above, it is our opinion that portions of the Michigan School for the Blind complex are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B and C.

Under Criterion A, it is clear that the Michigan School for the Blind *is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the patterns of our history*, at least at the local and regional levels. The MSB represents a dedicated attempt by the people of the State of Michigan to provide effective education to a relatively small, but significantly disadvantaged group of its citizenry. Throughout its more than 100 years of existence, it is apparent that its administration attempted to provide state of the art facilities and educational experiences to its students, until more recent *mainstreaming* practices eliminated the need for such a separate facility. It is not clear at this time, however, whether the policies of the MSB were simply reflective of then current educational philosophies and practices, or whether they had assumed an effective leadership role in the development of such programs. As such, it has not been determined whether or not the MSB would prove eligible under Criterion A based on its association with the education of the blind at the national or international levels.

In addition to its broader role in Michigan education, it is also clear that at least three of the surviving structures *are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past*, in this instance, the well respected local and regional architect, Edwin A. Bowd (Criterion B). These would include the former high school building, the administration building, and the superintendent's residence (Figure 6).

In addition to their association with Bowd, each of these three buildings are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in relation to their architectural merit, in that they *embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values ..."* (Criterion C). It should be noted that the modern landscape associated with these particular structures, although it appears to have been somewhat modified since the construction of the three significant structure, represents an important contextual element in their visual interpretation.

We were therefore recommend that limited portions of the MSB complex be nominated as a NRHP Historic District. Although it could be argued that the entire complex could be deemed eligible under Criterion A, and its general historical relationship to the education of the blind, the stronger nomination would appear to be limited to the three early twentieth century Bowd-designed structures that would qualify under Criteria A, B and C. The latter nomination would also include the landscape associated with these structures as a critical component in their overall visual setting.

Contributing Structures

Main Administration Building
High School Building
Superintendent's Residence

Non-Contributing Structures

All others.

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